

The Federal Communications Commission is considering a decision that would dramatically reduce the funding received by cities and counties across the country by allowing cable TV operators to significantly reduce their franchise fee payments by creating their own valuations for "in-kind" services such as community access TV channels, network connections, live transmission services (for County Courthouse and City Halls, schools, libraries and other community anchors), and other support currently required in local cable franchise agreements.

The proposed findings in this proceeding are misinformed and will harm the public interest by reducing local voices and diminishing broadband media resources available in our community.

In Humboldt County California, the benefits of community access media serve the public interest directly by providing a free and open platform for non-commercial speech.

Coverage of local government meetings helps citizens be informed participants in our local community. Local programs connect citizens to activities and events in our neighborhoods and the wider community. Diverse culture and arts are freely shared through community access media. Community centered media provides an open window to our local economy, helping entrepreneurs and workers to develop and share employment and job training opportunities. Access to education and local knowledge supports lifelong learning. Local media connections make our community more resilient - helping us prepare, respond and recover in case of disaster. The FCC's proposal of gifting commercial cable operators with reduced obligations would amount to corporate welfare for absentee owners at the direct expense of our local community.

Diverse geography and demographics give local communities unique challenges to meet basic needs for social services including health care, police, fire and emergency responders. Where resources are thin there is a special need for community-based response to recover from natural disasters. Local community media allow people to connect directly with agencies that provide local services, information and products - especially for disaster preparation, response and recovery.

Community media access empowers local experts to share their knowledge with students across the community. Local knowledge and unique digital archives of historic and cultural significance are captured and shared via robust non-commercial media access. Commercial media networks restrict and further monetize access, favoring voices of distant owners, monocultures and commercial ideas. Without community access media, local knowledge becomes less available and more costly to deliver.

Local communities co-exist with our natural resources, and effective management of those natural resources increasingly relies upon informed and connected communities to support diverse economic activity and efficient, effective public uses. The loss of local non-commercial media will reduce awareness of local issues, employment opportunities and public services. Concentrating market power in corporate centers tied to distant owners harms localism, diversity and competition in the marketplace of ideas.

Community access to non-commercial media is particularly vital for creative local economies where innovation and diverse cultures thrive. Commercial networks monetize scarcity and

reduce diversity by creating barriers to enter the marketplace of ideas. Without non-commercial community access media, diverse local voices have less access.

Lacking PEG access media, absentee commercial operators would be the sole gatekeepers between consumers, businesses, nonprofits and public agencies and the people they serve. Commercial media direct people to advertising or whatever content most benefits the network owner. Local PEG access media support freedom of information and expression.

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